

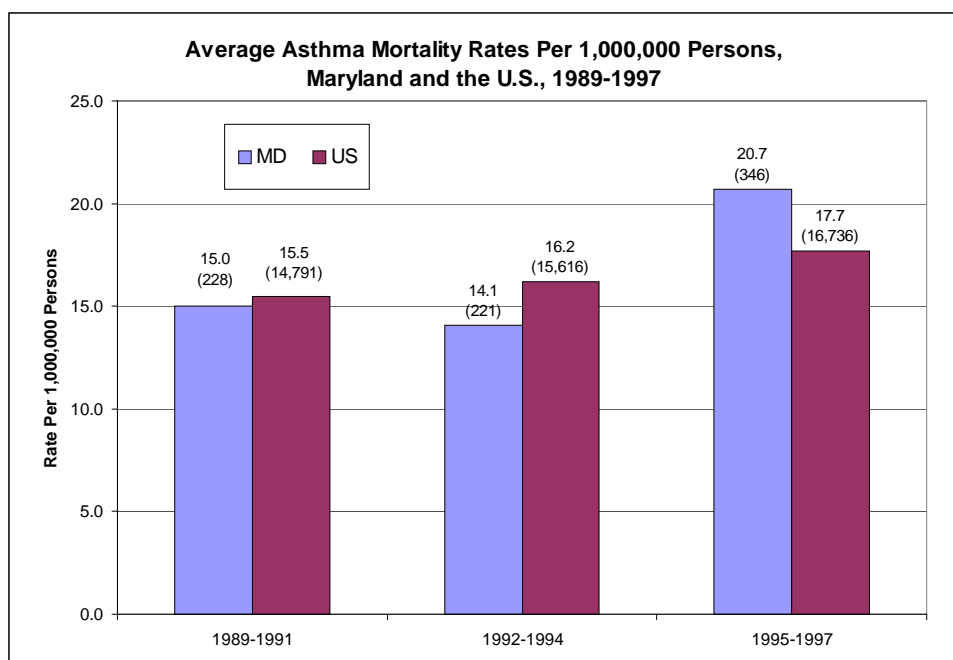
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

The Issue

Exposures to hazardous agents, natural or manmade, in the air, water, soil, and food are major contributors to illness, disability, and death worldwide. Among these, asthma, a health problem linked to indoor and outdoor air pollution, is a growing health problem in the U.S. and in Maryland.

Exposures to hazardous agents in the air, water, soil and food, and to other physical hazards in the environment are major contributors to illness, disability and death worldwide. Poor environmental quality is estimated to be directly responsible for approximately 25% of all preventable ill health in the world, with diarrheal diseases and respiratory infections leading the list. Poor environmental quality has its greatest impact on the people whose health status may already be at risk, especially due to age and illness.

“Environmental justice” was defined in 1999 by the Maryland Advisory Council on Environmental Justice as equal protection from environmental hazards for all people regardless of race, income, culture and social class. The Environmental Protection Agency has recommended a list of 45 variables to be used in assessing environmental justice concerns. Outdoor air quality, water quality, toxins and waste, healthy homes and healthy communities, and the infrastructure to support them are all vital to environmental concerns that face Maryland. Asthma, a health problem exacerbated by indoor and outdoor air pollution, is increasing in the U.S. and in Maryland. Asthma is presented as an example of a public health concern with many of the components of a potential environmental justice problem.



Note: Age-Adjusted to the 1970 U.S. Population.

Topics, by jurisdiction, included in the Health Improvement Plan

Statewide - *Environmental Justice - Asthma Mortality*

Howard County - *Reducing the Effects of Asthma*

Priority focus in other jurisdictions

Environmental health is also identified as a priority area for FY2000 in:

Anne Arundel County • Harford County • Baltimore City

Highlights of HIP strategies recommended to improve environmental health

(for in-depth details, see the complete text of each state and county module)

- Develop public health data that are useful for addressing environmental justice concerns. Asthma mortality and its relationship to geography, race, and socio-economic status will be used as a demonstration. (**State**)
- Demonstrate the use of geographic information systems (GIS) technology as a tool for the production of public health data that are useful for addressing environmental justice concerns. (**State**)
- Monitor provider care using the National Asthma Education and Prevention Program Guidelines for Diagnosis and Management of Asthma. (**Howard County**)
- Conduct educational campaigns on environmental factors affecting the quality of life of persons with asthma. (**Howard County**)

Statewide Partners

Baltimore Urban League Environmental Project • Community and Public Health Administration, DHMH • Environmental Health Risk Assessment Program • Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) • Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) • Maryland Local Health Departments • Office of Environmental Health Coordination, DHMH • Technical and Regulatory Services Administration, MDE